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Tekkonkinkreet (2007)



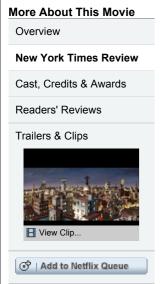
Treasure Town is the setting of the anime "Tekkonkinkreet," directed by Michael Arias. in which a couple of orphans battle gangsters who try to take to take over their turf

Orphan Superpower in the Realm of Anime

By MANOHLA DARGIS Published: July 13, 2007

In the anime "Tekkonkinkreet," two orphans of life's storms sail through the air like birds, like superheroes, like Jackie Chan. Known as Black and White (voiced by Kazunari Ninomiya and Yu Aoi), the boys live in an atmospherically derelict and imaginary Japanese place called Treasure Town, a surreal explosion of skewed angles, leaning towers, hanging wires, narrow alleys and gaudily cute flourishes that bring to mind a yakuza cityscape by way of a Hello Kitty theme park. Pigs don't fly here, though these two children certainly do with a flourish.





Perched like a crow high above the streets, Black watches over this strange, nearly all-male realm, fending off interlopers while keeping tabs on White. The two boys sleep in a brokendown car parked in a seemingly abandoned garage, far from both the prying and the protection of the grownup world. Save for an avuncular prune, Gramps (Rokuro Naya),, the adults who pass through their lives, including a couple of kindly cops and some oddly dressed gang members (they look ready to rumble with droogs), generally pass through without much comment. They offer the children greetings though precious little else, which makes the loneliness that clings to Black and

White — illustrated by the expressive use of negative space — all the more poignant and unacceptable.

Beautiful and a touch bewildering, "Tekkonkinkreet" kinks up a fairly familiar story of love and loyalty with a helping of underworld crime

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action, the usual juvenile agonies and some fuzzy philosophy. The first-time feature director Michael Arias, an American who lives and works in Japan, stuffs a lot of exposition and action into 100 eminently watchable if baggy minutes. But the laudably ambitious screenplay attributed to Anthony Weintraub tends to distract as much as it engages. Amid all the sharp turns, the periodic slicing and dicing, the gangsters and the shifty deals, the old man in the bathhouse and the snake in its lair, it can be tough to pinpoint what precisely Black and White are up to, much less the filmmakers.

Even so, "Tekkonkinkreet" demands to be seen, if only for its beauty. The generally bright palette and overall soft look work a nice contrast to the dark theme, as if the world itself were on the children's side. The character design of the boys is particularly lovely, almost loving, from the scar slashed across Black's right eye like a warning to the hat shaped like a bear's head that White wears, his mischievous, smiling face peeping through the animal's open mouth. There's a touch of Saint-Exupéry's "Little Prince" in these two children, whose adventures and lessons seem plucked right from this book: "To forget a friend is sad. Not every one has had a friend. And if I forget him, I may become like the grown-ups. ..." And that, as everyone knows, would be disastrous.

"Tekkonkinkreet" is rated R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian). Some adult language, fighting and bloodshed.

TEKKONKINKREET

Opens today in Manhattan.

Directed by Michael Arias; written (in Japanese, with English subtitles) by Anthony Weintraub, based on the manga by Taiyo Matsumoto; animation and production design by Studio4°C; music by Plaid; produced by Eiko Tanaka, Eiichi Kamagata, Masao Teshima and Ayao Ueda; released by Destination Films. At the Quad Cinema, 34 West 13th Street, Greenwich Village. Running time: 100 minutes.

WITH THE VOICES OF: Kazunari Ninomiya (Black), Yu Aoi (White), Masahiro Motoki (Snake) and Min Tanaka (Rat).

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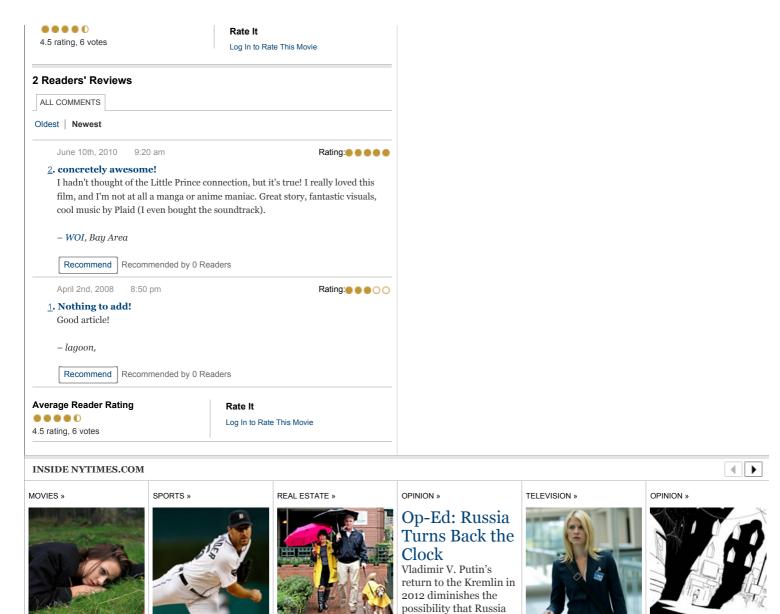
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